

THAILAND

Chaiyong Brahmawong

THE NATIONAL CONTEXT FOR DISTANCE EDUCATION

During the past two decades Thailand has experienced distance education in various forms. In 1971, an open admission university partly using a distance education approach was established and named Ramkamhaeng University. On September 5, 1978, Thailand's first open university using a full concept of distance education was established named Sukhothai Thammathirat Open University. Meanwhile, the Department of Non-Formal Education began its distance education programmes at the Elementary and Secondary Education Levels for out-of-school youth to study for an Elementary or Secondary Education certificate.

Thailand is one of the oldest nations in Asia. With a long history under a democratic system of government, it is making rapid progress both economically and politically to become a center of Southeast Asia.

Thai history dates back more than a thousand years to when Thai people gradually migrated from their kingdoms of Ailao, Nanchao, Yunan and Sibsong Panna in the Southern part of China to their final settlement at the present location on the Suwannabumi (Gold) Peninsular. Thai people established their first capital of Sukhothai (the Dawn of Happiness) around 1290 A.D. During a period of more than eight hundred years, the capital of Thailand was later moved to Ayuttaya in 1350, Thonburi in 1767, and Bangkok in 1782 A.D.

Situated in the center of Southeast Asia, Thailand's territory covers a land area of approximately 513,115 sq. kms; bordered by Burma in the north and the west; Lao in the north and the northeast; Kampuchea in the east; Malaysia, the Pacific, and the Indian Oceans in the south. Half of the land is under cultivation, with the rest remaining forest and savanna.

Geographically, Thailand is divided into four main parts; the Central, the North, the Northeast, and the South. The Central part where Bangkok is located is a low, fertile basin around both sides of the Chao Phya, Thailand's biggest and most important river which passes through the middle of the country; the Northern part is half flat and half mountainous; the Northeastern part, covering the country's largest area, is a high and dry land; and the Southern part is flat and fertile covering the peninsular stretching south from the Central part to the northern border of Malaysia. It has a tropical climate with a high degree of humidity and the average temperature of 28.9 C.

Thailand is an agricultural nation and expected to become a newly industrialized agricultural country (NIAC). It has a population of 56 million (1990), 43% of which are younger than age fifteen, with a growth rate of 1.6%. Only about 6 million cluster in Bangkok, while 90% of Thais live in the rural areas. The majority of the people are engaged in agriculture, forestry, and fishing.

Bangkok, the capital, is the center of commercial, political and modern social life. All governmental agencies, business centers, social and cultural activities are located in the Greater Bangkok area.

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Thailand is a free market economy state in which public and private sectors share equal opportunities in the development of the country. The public sector is in charge of the general administration of the country and the welfare of the people. State enterprises are established to take care of public utilities, as well as to launch new ventures which otherwise may be too risky for private sector investment. The private sector, on the other hand, takes care of businesses and industries not reserved by law to be operated by state enterprises. Thailand's economy is growing steadily with the estimated Gross Domestic Production growth rate of 12% (1990). Exports of agro-industrial products such as rice, textiles, and the tourist industry, are the major sources of national income. In 1990, Thailand's Gross Domestic Product (GDP) was more than 1,032 billion Baht (US\$ 41 billion) with the average per capita more than 30,000 Baht (US\$ 1,200). The growth of the economy in Thailand might be credited to both the education of the Thai and the efforts of the Thai government. During the past ten years, Thailand has been under a democratic system, which has increased the confidence of foreign investors.

The educational quality of the Thai people was increased as the result of the Educational Reforms of 1960 and 1978. Classroom teaching allowed more pupil interaction, group process, and practical work compared to the previous teaching and learning styles where the teacher used the talk and chalk technique. At the post secondary school level, more business and technical colleges were established to produce young people able to serve in the rapidly increasing business and industry spheres.

The majority of the Thai people are engaged in agriculture, forestry, and fishing. Men and women are treated equally in terms of job opportunities and social status.

Most Thai are Buddhists (95%) with some Muslims, Christians, and others. Buddhism has a strong influence upon arts, literature, education, politics and ultimately the Thai way of life. The people, however, have the right to participate in any religious activities. Under the Thai constitution and practice, His Majesty the King is the upholder and supporter of all religions professed by the Thai people. Christians live in all areas of the country while most Muslims live in the South.

Although there are some ethnic groups, the largest of whom are Chinese, there is no conflict nor racial discrimination between the Thais and minority groups.

The language of instruction is Thai. Thailand has its own writing system. Foreign languages are not allowed as the medium of instruction except in international schools and in teaching and learning other languages. There are three major dialects: Southern, Northern, and Northeastern. People from other parts understand the different dialects without much difficulty.

Educational System

Thailand has a long educational historical background. Presently, its educational system is well established, ranging from pre-school to higher education level. It also has the most outstanding distance education system in Asia.

The educational system in Thailand has evolved from informal and non-formal types of learning starting in homes and expanded to Buddhist monasteries, workshop apprenticeship, and royal palaces for more than seven hundred years. Formal education began in the early 1870's. Home was the first learning institution. Parents taught their

children the three R's as well as the trades, socialization, and in some cases, the arts of self-defense.

Buddhist monasteries offered Buddhist religious studies to boys to prepare them to become monks, which they all experienced for a period of time. This was usually for three months when they were twenty years old. The boys lived in the temple with senior monks who taught them how to read and write the Buddhist languages, Pali and Sanskrit, the Thai language as well as other necessary arts. Workshop apprenticeship took place in home industries and shops where boys came to live with the owner of the factories and learned the trade. They worked around the house and the factory without getting paid. In the Sukhothai and the Ayuttaya periods, certain prominent teachers offered private teaching at their homes. Young men would stay and learn in "Samnak" (camp or school). Most of the private teaching was about fighting arts. In royal palaces, educating princes and princesses to prepare them to live and work in the royal palace was undertaken by senior members of the royal families who were appointed as teachers by royal commands. Children of royal families learned the three R's, social, cultural, home economics, art, music, and for princes, the art of fighting.

In the time of King Narai the Great, a formal schooling system was introduced by Christian missionaries in Ayuttaya with the purpose of teaching the Bible to Thai people. Schools for young children and a college were established. In the years after the death of King Narai the Great, they were eradicated as part of a move to eliminate Christian influences upon Thai society.

Thailand was exposed to the western education system during the time of King Mongkut (Rama IV), who hired an English governess to teach his princes and princess. He allowed Christian missionaries to establish schools, the first of which was established in 1852, now called Bangkok Christian College (Secondary School).

During the reign of King Chulalongkorn (Rama V), the first public school for common people was established and the first Education Project was declared by a royal decree in 1871. Education was made available to all children. Under King Vajiravudh (Rama VI), the first institution of higher learning, Chulalongkorn University, was established in 1916. In 1921, the first compulsory Primary Education Act was enacted requiring all children younger than fifteen years old to attend school.

Presently, the four levels of education in Thailand are pre-school, elementary, secondary, and higher education. For Elementary and Secondary education the 6:3:3 system is used.

Pre-school education is provided for pre-school children between three and five years old to prepare for primary education in physical, social, emotional, and intellectual development. Pre-school education is non-compulsory, but private sectors and local communities are encouraged to establish kindergartens and early childhood centers. There were approximately 1,240,577 children or 30% of the 3-5 year olds, attending more than 16,928 kindergarten and centers according to the National Education Commission survey in 1987.

Elementary education is compulsory and free for all. A child must stay in school from the age of 6-11 (from Grades 1-6). Four clusters of subjects are emphasized; Skills (Thai language and mathematics), Life Experiences (Social Studies, Sciences, and Health Science), Work Education (Art, Handicrafts, Home Economics), and Character Building (Morality, Civic Responsibilities, Art, Music, Physical Education). English language is

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taught from Grade 5. Presently there are about 7.2 million pupils or 97% attending more than 35,000 schools with a dropout rate of 3%. About 3% of children aged six to eleven living in remote areas, handicapped, or socially and economically deprived, are unable to attend elementary schools.

Secondary education aims at providing necessary academic and vocational knowledge and experience to boys and girls after they have completed this elementary education. A student must study for six years from Matayom 1 - 3 in Lower Secondary schools and Matayom 4 - 6 in Upper Secondary schools. Students may select the program to meet their interest, whether it is academic (arts or sciences), or vocational. In 1987, about 40% of elementary school graduates continued to the Lower Secondary schools totalling 1,277,619. Among these pupils, about 905,211 or 70% proceeded to the Upper Secondary school academic and vocational programmes.

Higher education aims at the further development of human intellectual abilities; the advancement of knowledge and technology; and the provision of academic and professional manpower needed for national development. Higher education is offered in both public and private colleges and universities. A student may study for a bachelor's degree (four years), a Master's degree (two years), and a doctorate degree (three to five years). In some technical and business colleges, the student may work for a higher certificate or an associate degree. Presently, there are sixteen national universities and institutes and a number of private colleges and universities under the coordination of the Ministry of University Affairs. In addition, there are thirty six teacher training colleges offering bachelor's degrees in education, sciences, humanities, and management sciences. There are more than one hundred technical and vocational colleges under the Ministry of Education. There are also colleges offering specialized training in agriculture, nursing, public administration, and military under the Ministries of Agriculture, Public Health, Interior, and Defense respectively. The enrollment in traditional, closed-admission institutions is based on performance in a competitive national entrance examination. Each year about 200,000 students take the entrance examination, and approximately 35,000 pass. Those who do not pass may gain admission to one of the two open universities, namely Ramkhamhaeng University and Sukhothai Thammathirat Open University. Ramkhamhaeng University is a triple mode open-admission university, whereas Sukhothai Thammathirat Open University is a single mode distance education institution.

Thailand has a good network of communication and transport systems. There are countrywide systems of roads (43,840 kms), rail (3,800 kms), and air, making it relatively quick and easy to travel by bus, train, and air services. In the Greater Bangkok area, a rapid transit system consisting of electric trains and monorails is being developed. There are more than 270 radio stations, and five colour television networks on Pal-B broadcasting system (Channels 3, 5, 7, 9, and 11) covering 95% of populated areas. While TV Channels 3, 5, 7 and 9 are operated on a commercial basis, Channel 11 was established for education, public relations, and national security purposes and is operated by the Department of Public Relations. Due to Channel 11's limited times for network broadcasting, however, because all PRD stations in the provincial areas still operate commercially, it is unable to give adequate air time for educational programs. The National Education Commission (NEC) is therefore planning to establish a new educational television network in the near future. In 1987, there were approximately 18 million radio and 4 million television sets in the country. In addition, there are more than half a million telephones with a target of 3,000,000 or more

by 1995. The postal, telegraph, and telecommunication services via satellites (Intelsat and Indonesia's Palapa) are insufficient to meet the demands of domestic users. Therefore the government has permitted a private firm to launch a local satellite, the ThaiSat, to serve the needs of public and private sectors. On-line and computerized telecommunications are available for business industries and education, both in Bangkok and provincial areas.

HISTORY AND BACKGROUND

Distance education in Thailand is provided by agencies in the Ministry of Education for elementary and secondary education, and the Ministry of University Affairs for higher education. The historical background, administrative and academic structure, instructional media system, delivery, and evaluation systems vary according to the institution.

Informal distance education was considered to have existed nearly a thousand years at the time of the Sukhothai Period. King Ramhamhaeng the Great reigned his country with an open policy allowing his subjects to trade and learn as they wish. Learning took place mostly at home without a formal curriculum. In the Bangkok Period, when the Wat Po, a Buddhist temple was established, learning centers were available within the compounds to offer knowledge and skills on medicine, and Yoga techniques. The Wat Po is considered the first open university in Thailand.

In the present concept, distance education in Thailand was first developed in 1933 with the establishment of the University of Moral and Political Sciences. The full use of distance education techniques was developed at the establishment of Sukhothai Thammathirat Open University in 1978. At the elementary and secondary levels, distance education programmes were started by the Department of Non-Formal Education (DNFE) a few years later.

The University of Moral and Political Sciences offered a general degree, Bachelor of Thammasart (BTh) via what is often called the Academic Market approach with an open admission policy to work towards degrees in law and business administration. Students bought texts and handouts to study by themselves or attend classes on campus. No distance educational media was specially designed for home-based students. The university was converted to a conventional university and renamed Thammasart University in 1957, at which time entrance examinations were required for admission.

Years later, Ramkamhaeng University with an Academic Market policy was established as a public university by a Royal Charter on February 26, 1971. Originally modelled after the University of Moral and Political Sciences, it was later modified to more systematically serve the needs of students, employing certain distance learning approaches such as producing better texts, and using radio/television programmes for direct teaching. RU is an open-admission institution which provides a triple mode instructional system to class attending students, home-based distance learning students, and mixed type students both attending classes and studying by themselves. Their study mode was based on their preference to be on-campus, off-campus students or a mix of both.

Sukhothai Thammathirat Open University was established as a public university on September 5, 1978. It is operated on the single mode policy and uses the full concept of distance education. The whole range of specially designed printed materials, radio as well as television programmes, tutorials, and computerized instruction are used.

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The Department of Non-Formal Education, Ministry of Education, employs distance education via the so-called radio correspondence programmes for home-based students who had not completed elementary or secondary schools. It is aimed at providing the chance to study for both elementary and secondary education certificates.

Generally there are three factors leading to the establishment of distance education institutions. These are to meet the needs of those who had not earned certificates or degrees via conventional means, the need to upgrade the quality of life, and the need for improvement in the work of the people.

The Use of Instructional Media in Distance Education

Historical development of the use of instructional media for distance education varies according to institution.

Sukhothai Thammathirat Open University (STOU) developed a multi-media package production system to be carried out by course teams. The production of multi-media packages is undertaken by a committee called "the Course-Team" which proceeds along appropriate steps set forth in the Multi-Media Package Production system. Printed media component is produced by the Office of the University Press. Audio-visual media, radio and television programmes, and tutorial media are produced by the Office of Educational Technology. The steps include the need to Analyze/Review the Content and Units; Identify Teaching Units; Plan the Lesson; Prepare Learning Activities; Produce Multi-Media Packages; Construct Test Items for Evaluation; Combine Multi-Media into Distance Learning Packages; Conduct Developmental Testing of Multi-Media Packages; and Implement Distance Learning Multi-Media Packages. The course team consists of nine to eleven members, including five to seven content specialists, one educational technologist, one evaluation specialist, one editor and a secretary. One academic is appointed as Chairman, and one as editor. The course team is appointed by the Academic Senate and charged with the responsibilities of the planning, the preparation, the production, and the evaluation of the media needed for the course. The course team also selects and submits the names of the writers of the fifteen units for the approval of the Academic Senate.

Ramkamhaeng University (RU) makes use of class-room instruction as the main delivery approach. Lectures are conducted in various lecture halls, each of which can accommodate from 3,000 to 5,000 students. Closed-circuit television is used to link two or more lecture halls for some courses. Texts are available for all the courses offered, although most of them are not written for self-instructional purposes. Radio and television programmes are broadcast for certain foundation courses for home based students. Radio programmes are broadcast on Radio Thailand Programme 3, and television programmes are broadcast on Channel 11 of the Department of Public Relation and on the Thai Army's TV Channel 7. Since lectures are available for all courses, tutorials are provided on a limited scale. Students, therefore, have to help themselves by setting up the so-called peer tutorials on campus. Those students who have a good understanding of the course act as tutors and volunteer to teach other students. At the end of the semester students have to come to take their final examinations at the university's two campuses. Of more than 302,000 students, there are approximately 98,663 regularly class-attending students (32.67%), 127,383 students (42.12%) occasionally attend classes, and more than 75,954 students (25.15%) study by themselves from texts, radio, and television programmes.

Financial Supports of Distance Education

Financial support for distance education comes mainly from student fees, from the government, from external assistance, and investments. The sources and forms of support vary from one institution to another.

STOU receives only 15-20% of its budget from the government for the salaries of staff and construction of basic infrastructure such as buildings, workshops, and laboratories. Other expenditures, mostly operating costs and developing of advanced infrastructure, come from tuition fees and external assistance. External assistance is granted from various international organizations such as UNESCO, British Council, Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA), Republic of Germany, and local business firms. For example, JICA provided a grant aid totalling US\$ 12 million for the construction of the Educational Broadcasting Production Center for producing radio and TV programmes, and the Government of the Republic of Germany provided nearly the same amount for the establishment of the Printing Technology Training Institute. In addition, STOU invests funds for various purpose such as Research Fund, Distance Education Media Development Fund, totalling about Baht 300,000 million. This yields more than 20 million Baht in annual interest. These form the annual budget of about 350 million Baht per year. The sources and forms of financial assistance have not changed for STOU.

The sources and forms of financial support for RU are similar to those of STOU. RU gets about 60% from the government for similar types of expenditure, as it has more staff than STOU. (While STOU has less than 300 full time academics, RU has more than 2,000). The sources and forms have not changed. Since 1991, there has been a movement to free universities from a government framework so that each university can manage itself independently, but it has not yet been implemented.

For the DNFE, most financial support comes from the government. Support from students fees and external assistance are limited.

Although, more distance education institutions may not be needed in the near future, distance education in Thailand is expanding in terms of offering new programmes, reaching more target groups, and improving the distance education techniques used in conventional institutions. Because of the demands for professional enrichment of people in various fields, existing distance education institutions plan to establish new schools and programmes of study. For example, STOU intends to establish the School of Science and Technology in 1995 and offer three Master of Education programmes in Educational Administration, Curriculum and Instruction, and Educational Technology and Communications. Master's degree programmes in other areas will also be offered within the next three years. The growth of business in Thailand offers work to secondary school graduates. More young people will want to work and study at the same time. Existing distance education institutions like STOU will have to modify its distance education system to make it suitable for younger people to study by themselves. Conventional universities, consequently, may find it more difficult in the future to confine their students to class-room instruction. Distance teaching techniques may be developed as integral parts of conventional teaching to reduce talk-and-chalk types of instruction and allow more time for seminar types of instruction.

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THE LEGAL STATUS OF DISTANCE EDUCATION

All distance education institutions are established by their own charter, thus they have the same legal status and authority as other educational institutions and certificates and degrees are of the same standard. RU was established by the Ramkhamhaeng University of 1971 and its amendment in 1978. STOU was enacted by the Sukhothai Thammathirat Open University Royal Charter of 1978.

OVERVIEW OF CURRENT SITUATION

Aims and objectives of distance education

The aims and objectives of distance education in Thailand are generally based on the philosophy of continuing life long education by providing and expanding opportunities for people who, for whatever reasons, had not earned certificates or degrees from other universities, and at the same time upgrading the quality of life and work. Various distance education institutions have their aims and objectives stated differently. For example, STOU states its aims and objectives as follows:

- 1) To "open and expand" the opportunities for higher education to working adults and secondary school graduates who are, for whatever reasons, unable to attend conventional colleges and universities;
- 2) To provide the most suitable self-instructional system based on existing infrastructure both on the part of the university and the students;
- 3) To utilize existing human resources and infra-structure outside the university in the production and dissemination of knowledge and experience to the students;
- 4) To provide continuing education and outreach programmes to all the public to upgrade their work and the quality of their life;
- 5) To make full use of advanced telecommunication and computer technologies for production and delivery systems.

STOU has to achieve four objectives observed by all public and private universities under the Ministry of University Affairs. The four objectives are:

- 1) To provide and promote academic and professional education at the university level in order to help the people upgrade their educational standard and serve the needs of the society;
- 2) To promote research and studies for generating new knowledge and applying it to national development;
- 3) To provide public service by disseminating knowledge to the people to help them upgrade their personal development and their professional competencies;
- 4) To preserve and promote arts, traditions, and cultural heritages of the country.

Control, Organizational and Management Structure

The control, organizational and management structure of distance education institutions of higher learning under the Ministry of University Affairs are generally alike, but the DNFE in the Ministry of Education is different.

Both STOU and RU are governed by University Councils. The management is under the Presidents and his staff. The following is the case of STOU illustrating the control, organizational, and management structure.

Like other universities in Thailand, STOU is governed by the University Council, the supreme governing board which selects and recommends the Royal appointment of the President and appoints high level administrators. The University Council is a lay board appointed by a Royal decree. It consists of a Chairman, members by position, and representatives of experts, and a Secretary. Members by position are the Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of University Affairs or representative, the Director-General of the Department of Public Relations, the Director-General of the Department of Technical and Economic Cooperation, the Director-General of the Department of Post and Telegraphs, the Governor of the Communication Authority of Thailand, the Director of Mass Communication Organization, the President of STOU, and the representative of the Academic Senate. The Secretary is appointed from one of STOU's vice-presidents. Representatives of experts (nine members) are selected from professionally successful individuals in the areas of science and technology, social sciences, and humanities. The members of the University Council serve a two-year term.

The President and his administrative staff are responsible for the overall university administration together with deans, directors of respective schools, institutes and offices. The university is divided into sections under the charge of vice-presidents. The seven sections are Administration, Academic Affairs, Planning, Development, Operation, Educational Service, and Special Affairs. There are presently ten schools under the charges of chairpersons or Deans. The Office of the President in charge of general administration consists of Central Division, Planning Division, Finance Division, Personnel Division, Procurement and Property Division, Internal Audit Unit, and Seminar Centers.

For services, there are six offices (administrative organizations equivalent to schools or institutes), headed by Directors, namely Office of Academic Affairs, Office of Educational Technology, Office of Educational Services, Office of Documentation and Information, Office of University Press, Office of Continuing Education, Office of Computers, and Office of Registration, Records and Evaluation.

Unlike Ramkamhaeng and other universities, STOU's schools are not divided into departments. STOU was established to fully utilize existing human resources and to prevent departmentalism. However, offices and institutes are divided into centers and divisions.

Geographical Coverage of the Provision of Distance Education

Through a good network of communication, the coverage of distance education is nationwide, reaching more than 90% of the populated areas via radio and television broadcast.

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Instructional and Delivery Systems

Among the three distance education institutions, STOU has the most systematic plan for its instructional and delivery systems.

Ramkamhaeng University, since it makes use of class-room instruction as the main delivery means, produces texts in traditional format. These texts are written individually by its academic staff. As a matter of policy for class-room extension RU makes use of direct teaching radio and television programmes for students who cannot attend lecture sessions on the two campuses at Hua Mark Main Campus and Pachim Sawat Swannapasri Campus (Toong Sethi), each about 20 kms from the heart of Bangkok.

The DNFE's distance education unit produces radio and television programmes through the DNFE's Center for Educational Technology (CET) and broadcasts via Radio Thailand Programme II for radio and Channel 11 for television programmes. Texts are available in some courses. Local studies are also set up for interest groups at provincial secondary schools for the radio-correspondence programmes.

STOU is operated under the single mode system of instruction, and students mainly study by themselves. As stated in Article 6 of STOU Royal Charter (1978), educational experience provided by the university

...shall be disseminated through printed media via correspondence, radio and television broadcasts, and other techniques which are appropriate in helping the student learn effectively by themselves without having to attend regular classrooms....

Thus, STOU is prohibited by its own charter from setting up regular classes, except for special tutorials and professional enrichment activities. In order to provide education without regular classrooms, STOU developed its own distance education system called the STOU Plan using a systems approach to ensure that each programme of study is relevant to the needs of the society and the instructional system is helpful to home-based students. According to the STOU Plan, the instructional system model for media production and delivery of distance education consists of five majors steps.

Identify Problems and Needs

Before offering a curriculum or a study programme, each school must conduct a survey to identify problems and assess existing needs of the society so that the offered programme will really meet public needs and contain the type of knowledge and the skills that are useful for personal and national development.

Develop the Curriculum

After the area of study has been identified based on the needs assessment conducted in Step 1, a curriculum is developed in the form of an integrated curriculum. This covers both an inter- and multi-disciplinary approach to support the nature of STOU programmes which cover a wide range of subject matter within each area of concentration. Consequently each curriculum consists of philosophy, rationale and principles, aims, content structure, course list, course descriptions, recommended outline for each course's fifteen units, and unit objectives stated in behavioral terms.

Produce Multi-Media Distance Learning Packages

A clearly stated systems model or flow-chart is needed for outlining logical production steps for each type of media. The major steps include the planning, preparation, production, developmental testing, and evaluation.

Identify and Implement Delivery System

The delivery system is identified based upon the existing socio-economic and cultural infra-structure of the country. In Thailand, print technology is readily available and the print media are considered the most economical media in education. Consequently print is used as a core medium in STOU's delivery system. In addition, STOU makes use of the broadcasting infrastructure that exists including Radio Thailand's 40 stations all over the country, as well as commercially operated TV Channel 7 and Channel 9. STOU has helped create a new infrastructure that includes Radio Thailand Educational Network, and the newly established Television Channel 11, which STOU helped develop and justify. STOU is also very much involved in helping to plan the new non-commercial educational television network whose approval is now pending the Cabinet's decision. STOU also makes full use of existing educational institutions and their staffs for tutorials, professional experience, and information services.

After identifying the modes of delivery, the delivery system is implemented using print media, AV media, radio programmes, TV programmes, community resources, and study centers.

Identify Modes of Evaluation and Follow-up

Two modes of evaluation are identified in STOU's distance education system. Evaluation of students' learning achievement and evaluation of the distance education system itself. STOU developed the evaluation system to be the responsibility of designated divisions.

The delivery system of distance education at STOU is designed to disseminate knowledge and experience to its home-based students through print and audio-visual media via the mail, radio programmes via Radio Thailand Education Network (49.5 hours per week), television programmes via Channels 9 and 11, and tutorial sessions provided at local study centers located at provincial secondary schools, some teachers' colleges, and provincial universities.

Research Activities

Research activities in distance education institutions in Thailand are of academic and institutional research. Research activities are usually identified in the research plan of each institution. Academic research activities are conducted by academic staff to discover and expand the frontiers of knowledge in their fields of specialization. Research activities concentrate on the kinds of knowledge that may be delivered via distance education, content and media relationships, production and use of the various media, developmental testing of media packages, effectiveness and types of delivery systems, and evaluation of students' achievement. Institutional research activities are aimed at improving the distance education system.

Enrollment and Graduates in Distance Education

Enrollment in distance education in Thailand is generally high. For STOU, there are approximately 450,000 students. The average new annual intake is about 80,000 students, most of whom are working adults. Since 1982, STOU has produced more than 111,000 graduates in the ten schools. RU has more than 302,000 students. Its annual intake, most of whom are high school graduates, is about the same as STOU. Since 1973, the RU has produced more than 218,000 graduates in the seven schools.

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International Affiliation and Cooperation

Distance education institutions in Thailand usually have some sort of affiliation and cooperation with some international organizations.

STOU is a member of the Asian Association of Open Universities (AAOU) and International Council for Distance Education (ICDE). It receives cooperation from UNESCO, the British Council, the Japan International Cooperation Agency, and the Government of the Republic of Germany. RU receives cooperation from the Open Learning Authority in Canada, and a few universities in the United States.

Problems and Issues

Problems and issues in distance education in Thailand may be described in terms of administration, personnel, communication and educational technologies infra-structure, delivery, and evaluation.

Distance education institutions, unlike conventional institutions, still have to prove themselves to win the trust of the public. Administrators must understand the philosophy of distance education, and be innovative to bring progress to the institution. Many administrators have had experience in traditional settings and so have difficulties in managing institutions in more innovative ways.

Personnel in distance education institutions usually have to work very hard to serve a large number of students. It is sometimes very difficult to recruit this type of personnel with competence, devotion, and a good understanding of the distance education system. Some academic and non-academic staff transfer to other universities or move to the private sector after a while because of the over-load in distance education institutions.

The success of distance education depends greatly on educational communication and technologies. The institutions have to invest in a communication and educational technological infra-structure which is very costly. Consequently, some type of educational and communication technologies needed for the production of distance education media packages are not yet established.

Delivery of some components of distance education is possible through the network of regional centers, local study centers, and area resource centers. Presently, distance education institutions such as STOU make agreements with the Department of Secondary Education, Ministry of Education for the use of provincial secondary schools as their study centers. Provincial public libraries, under the agreement with the DNFE, are also utilized for deposits of books, texts, and other types of printed materials for students. The number of local study centers however is neither sufficient nor convenient for students in remote areas. Tutorial sessions are not provided in every province because of the limited number of students registering for the course.

Sufficient Area Resource Centers (ARC), aimed at providing the various forms of information and documentation, and other types of activities have not been established to serve the need of all students. Originally, ten to twelve ARC's were supposed to be established. To date, only a few have been completed.

Evaluation of students' achievement should be based on both the evaluation of process

(assignments, activities, etc.) and the evaluation of product (final examinations). Presently, the evaluation of most courses is based totally on final examinations. The assignments performed by students are not counted as part of the final evaluation, thus making the students feel that the activities are not important. Some of them therefore do not carry out the activities at all.

CONCLUSION

Distance education in Thailand has grown rapidly during the past two decades. It has gained much public support and recognition, thus becoming an effective tool for human resource development. As Thailand develops its communication infrastructure, better delivery system can be developed for home-based students.

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